

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-14 are pending in this application. Claims 2-6 and 9-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1, 7, 8, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. patent 6,546,052 to Maeda et al. (herein "Maeda"). Claims 2, 3, 9, and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Maeda. Claims 4 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Maeda as applied to claims 1-3, 8-10, and 14, and further in view of U.S. patent 6,611,628 to Sekiguchi et al. (herein "Sekiguchi"). Claims 5, 6, 12, and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Maeda and Sekiguchi as applied to claims 1-4, 8-11, and 14, and further in view of U.S. patent 6,400,890 to Nagasaka et al. (herein "Nagasaka").

Addressing first the rejection to claims 2-6 and 9-13 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, that rejection is traversed by the present response. The noted claims are amended by the present response to clarify the language therein and to provide clear antecedent basis for all the noted terms. The claim amendments are believed to address the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Addressing now each of the above-noted prior art rejections based on Maeda as the primary reference, those rejections are traversed by the present response.

Each of the claims is amended by the present response to clarify feature recites therein. Specifically, independent claim 1 now recites computing a statistical feature amount for each "of time-continuous frames" of the video image, and dividing the video image into a plurality of scenes "continuous in time" in accordance with the statistical feature amount. The other independent claims recite similar limitations. Such features are believed to be fully supported by the original specification for example at page 9, lines 16-17; page 22, last line to page 23, to page 33, line 13, and Figures 5A, 5B, as non-limiting examples.

The claims as currently written are believed to clearly distinguish over the applied art to Maeda that discloses extracting a plurality of objects from a single frame, and not from "time-continuous frames".

More particularly, Maeda discloses in Figures 1-5 an image processing apparatus in which an image of a person is extracted as a rectangular texture, and a blue-back portion is extracted to generate mask information. Image data of the texture and mask information is input to the object encoding unit 105. That is, in Maeda an object and a background are separately captured, encoded, and then combined. In Maeda the object and background of a single frame are separately extracted and then encoded. That is, Maeda extracts a plurality of objects from a single frame. That feature is in contrast to the claims as currently written.

The basis for the outstanding rejection states that in Maeda:

...each of the images of the person as extracted by object extractor 103 represents a scene of the video, and since successive images of the person in the moving video are extracted, the moving video image is thus divided into a plurality of scenes in accordance with the statistical feature amount (images of the person), see column 7, lines 43-67...¹

In response to that basis for the outstanding rejection, applicants note again that Maeda discloses extracting objects from a single frame. In other words, Maeda divides a frame into a plurality of regions (objects).

In contrast to Maeda, in the claims as currently written a video image including time-continuous frames is divided into a plurality of scenes continuous in time, each scene containing one or more of the time-continuous frames. Such an operation in the claims differs from Maeda extracting a plurality of objects from a single frame.

In such ways, the claims are believed to clearly distinguish over Maeda.

Moreover, no teachings in the further cited references to Sekiguchi or Nagasaka are believed to overcome the above-noted deficiencies in Maeda. More specifically, Sekiguchi

¹ Office Action of August 18, 2004, page 3, lines 6-9.

discloses thumbnails but does not disclose or suggest any type of "scene division" as set forth in the claims. Nagasaka discloses a plurality of scenes of an icon image of each typical frame, but does not disclose or suggest the claimed scene dividing device that divides a video image into a plurality of scenes continuous in time. In such ways, no teachings in Sekiguchi or Nagasaka can overcome the above-noted deficiencies in Maeda.

In view of these foregoing comments, applicants respectfully submit the claims as currently written distinguish over the applied art.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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